

## **Astrobiology Penetrates the Public Consciousness: Mission Accomplished?**

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Boiling mud travels around America's heartland, Europa gives oceans a whole new definition, and Mars finally reaches its cold, rocky, icy destiny- in American consciousness that is. After six short years, Astrobiology has permeated into our living rooms, theaters, and museums. In September 2004, NOVA airs its four part series, "Origins," narrated by Neil deGrasse Tyson, prominently featuring 9 different members of the NAI. Two months later, the New York Hall of Science opens an \$88 million expansion featuring a 5000 square foot exhibit on "The Search for Life Beyond Earth." In January 2005, director James Cameron and Disney release the high-resolution, 3-D IMAX film, "Aliens of the Deep," connecting hydrothermal vent research on Earth to the possibility of life on Europa. And in February, the Space Science Institute launches "Alien Earths," a 3000 square foot traveling exhibit to small and mid-size museums and science centers around the country.

OPM, other people's money, bore these projects to completion, but NAI played a noteworthy role. From providing content ideas and connections to researchers to developing supporting materials, providing critical letters of support, and occasionally small amounts of funding, NAI's Education and Public Outreach (E/PO) program has leveraged the millions of dollars invested in these projects, communicating NASA's work in the core aspects of astrobiology and showcasing the NAI in particular. These are the fruits of NAI's public outreach these past six years. What next? Is public attention a benefit to astrobiology? These are the questions before us, all of us, now.